



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

 **Samaritan's Purse**
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF

Emergency Food Security Program in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Agreement No.: 72DFFPI8GR00072

Period: September 27, 2018 to February 28, 2021

Final Results Report

Awardee HQ contact person Name, Email, Phone, Office Address	David Ott, dott@samaritan.org , (828) 278 1450 P.O. Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607
Awardee host country contact person Name, Email, Phone, Office Address	Robert Batusa rbatusa@samaritan.org +243 993 019 604 Avenue Lusambo, No. 18 Quartier Lumumba, Commune Mbunya, Ville de Bunia

List of Acronyms

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ATG	Agricultural Training Group
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BUBD	Best Used Before Date
CAR	Central African Republic
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DDR	Daily Distribution Report
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFP	Food for Peace
HH	Household
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
LCSI	Livelihood Coping Strategy Index
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LRIP	Local, Regional and International Purchase
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MT	Metric Ton
NFI	Non-Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCC	Office Congolaise de Controle
OFDA	Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
SENASEM	Service Nationale des Semences
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SP	Samaritan's Purse
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Project Overview	6
i. Beneficiary Registration	7
ii. Procurement of Food Commodities	8
iii. Emergency Food Assistance	9
iv. Agriculture Support – Seeds and Tools	9
3. Project Activities, Outputs, and Results	9
4. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies and Tools	16
5. Qualitative Results	28
6. Successes	29
7. Challenges and Adaptations	30
8. Lessons Learned	33
9. Cross-Cutting Elements	35
Acknowledgements	37

I. Executive Summary

The Emergency Food Security Program in Democratic Republic of the Congo project aimed to save lives and reduce human suffering by improving the food security status of conflict-affected people, particularly Central African Republic (CAR) refugees settled in Bas-Uele Province, through the provision of emergency food assistance and agricultural support. In order to address the urgent food gaps and needs of the CAR refugees, Congolese refugee returnees, and their host communities in Bas-Uele, this project planned to provide food rations to 10,000 households (HHs) (approximately 60,000 individuals) in order to ensure their immediate access to food inputs. As a complementary activity, the project also provided agricultural inputs to selected participants to help them increase their food production.

The program provided emergency food assistance to support the most vulnerable segments of the population, especially refugees, to help restore their livelihoods and reduce the overall food insecurity, and reduce their need to return to insecure zones in search of food. It also provided support for the agriculture-based livelihoods through provision of seeds, farming tools and essential information sharing, to facilitate full realization of value from the inputs provided.

The food commodities were purchased regionally, and over 99.96% of these were received and prepositioned in Samaritan's Purse (SP)-managed warehouses in Isiro, Dungu and Ango Territories to enable a quick and effective response to the needs of the targeted food-insecure HHs.

The program worked closely with the local and refugee leadership to identify and select intervention sites and was implemented in sites approved by these leadership groups. The social dynamics in Bas-Uele Province are characterized by complex cohabitation of different CAR refugee identity groups, including Selekas (Muslims), Anti-Balakas (Christians), Mbororo herders (comprised of Muslims from South Sudan), Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) members and Congolese returnees fleeing the atrocities of the CAR conflict. Some of the established groups try to control the roads in order to facilitate the support of their CAR rebel groups, thereby increasing tensions.

The assistance to the beneficiaries was provided through direct food distributions depending on the prevailing local conditions in the two territories of Ango and Bondo, such as safety and security of staff, beneficiaries, and suppliers/ transporters. The seeds were provided through fairs which depended on the capacity of the local markets to support the needs without negatively impacting the local population, availability of seed stocks, and accessibility of the project sites.

The program planned to provide 60,000 food rations² to the beneficiaries through direct distribution, for six assistance cycles. Throughout the lifespan of the program, 984.55 metric tons (MT) of food commodities were provided to 4,513 HHs comprising 24,828 individuals including 11,153 refugees within 2,095 HHs. Between December 16, 2018 and September 29, 2020, the program responded to the emergency humanitarian needs of beneficiaries cumulatively through direct food distributions and agricultural support.

Through the Agriculture Sector, 20,798 conflict -impacted food- and seed-insecure beneficiaries (including 10,604 refugees) were supported to access seeds, farming tools, and essential agricultural training. The training provided information aimed at ensuring maximum output from the inputs provided. All the farming tools were provided to the beneficiaries directly, based on beneficiary preferences. Assorted farming seeds were provided to the beneficiaries through seed fairs, while vegetable seeds were provided through direct distributions. Samaritan's Purse worked closely with *Service Nationale des Semences* (SENASA, the local seed quality control organization) to identify seed vendors for distributions to the seed-insecure beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were enabled to access 27.180 MT of assorted seeds through the program.

The Food Assistance activities improved the food security status of beneficiaries reached, by improving food access through in-kind distributions. The average food consumption score (FCS) of beneficiaries served by the Food Assistance Sector was raised from 21.33 to 31.74 and 31.36 on the two different axes reached, respectively,³ over the life of the project. The sector managed to meet the objective of improving the FCS by at least 10 points. Additionally, the mean reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) among project participants decreased from 17.68 to 13.70 and 10.68⁴ across the two intervention sites, while the average Household Hunger Score (HHS) decreased from 3.09 to 2.37 and 0.49 across the intervention sites.⁵

Overall, the food assistance program did not fully respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of the entire population of conflict-affected persons as planned because the Best Used By Dates (BUBDs) indicated on the commodities fell due and the commodities were condemned by the DRC government entities and recommended for destruction. Samaritan's Purse ensured the disposition of the condemned food and oversaw the process in conjunction with local DRC government authorities.

² Each food ration comprised 36 kg of maize flour, 11 kg of beans, 0.5 kg of iodized table salt and 2.76 L of vegetable cooking oil- which is enough to meet the nutritional needs of a family of six persons for 15 days.

³ Samaritan's Purse vulnerability targeting and Post Distribution Monitoring.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

2. Project Overview

The Emergency Food Security Program in Democratic Republic of the Congo was an FFP (BHA) Funded program which had an initial timeline of eight months, but was extended due to complex and unforeseen challenges. The main objective was to provide emergency food assistance to save lives and improve food security for conflict-affected HHs, specifically CAR refugees and vulnerable DRC refugee returnees and host families in Bas-Uele Province. The Emergency Food Security Program was implemented between September 27, 2018 and February 28, 2021 in Ango and Bondo Territories of Bas-Uele Province of DRC.

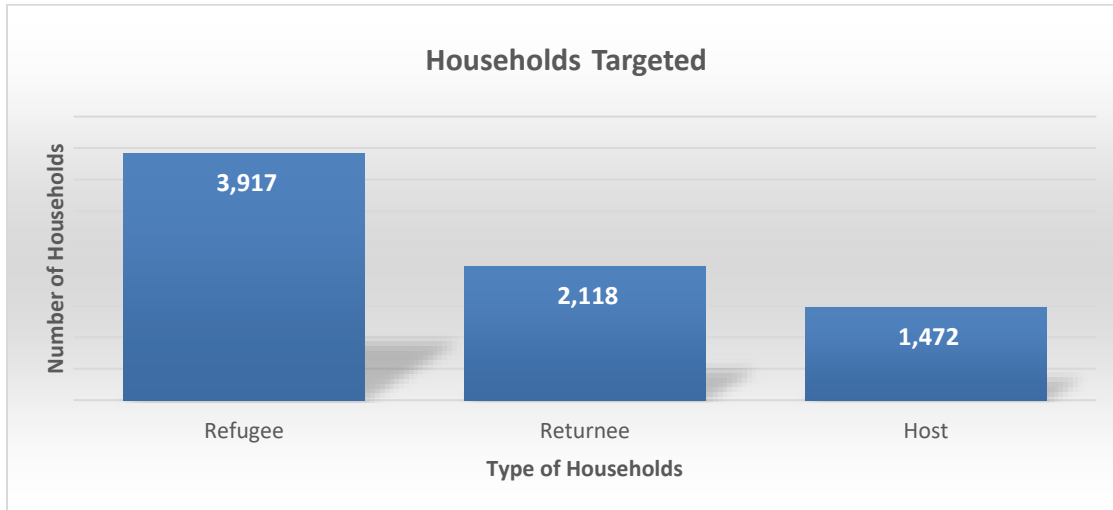
Samaritan's Purse did a Go-and-See mission to determine intervention feasibility based on the actual presence of conflict-affected HHs, security situations, and existing humanitarian needs. This was followed by targeting in the two territories of Ango and Bondo to identify the vulnerable population of refugees, returnees, and host communities in these areas, and recruiting those targeted into the program for humanitarian assistance. The project registered 7,507 HHs (38,912 individuals) residing in the target territories of Ango and Bondo in Bas-Uele Province for food assistance, out of the planned 10,000 HHs (60,000 individuals). Of these, approximately 51.1% or 3,917 HHs (approx. 19,874 individuals) were CAR refugees, while the remaining 48.9% or 3,590 HHs (approx. 19,038 individuals) were vulnerable Congolese refugee returnees and host families. Complete targeting of the planned 10,000 HHs was not achievable due to the mobility of the refugees between DRC and CAR in search of livelihoods and fleeing from armed groups prevalent in areas inhabited by the refugees.

At the beginning of the intervention, the project carried out HH vulnerability surveys to collect information on predetermined food vulnerability criteria. The surveys encompassed all required FFP indicators, as well as cluster-standard vulnerability indicators, allowing them to serve for both project participant selection and baseline purposes. The collected information measured social vulnerability, among other vulnerability criteria, which included people with specific needs (elderly persons, persons with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses, pregnant and lactating women, female-headed households [FHHs], child-headed households [(CHHs], etc.); displacement status (refugee, host family, refugee returnee, etc.) and duration of displacement; and food vulnerability, which encompassed the Livelihood Coping Strategy Index (LCSI) and rCSI. The results were then combined to produce a vulnerability score assigned to each surveyed HH, and only those who passed the thresholds were selected as participants to receive assistance. In this selection process, the most vulnerable HHs were prioritized for food assistance.

i. Beneficiary Registration

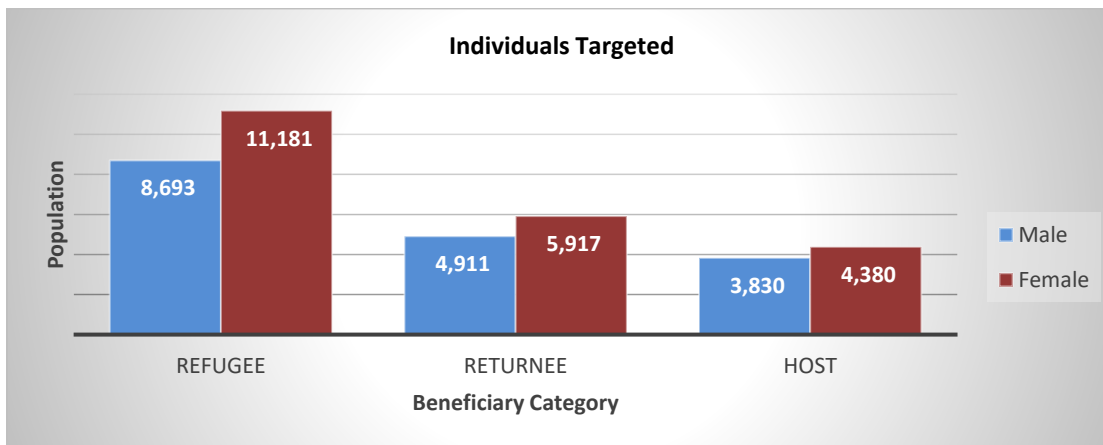
The figure below shows the overall number of HHs targeted for assistance in both the Food Security and Agriculture Sectors.

Figure 1 Households Targeted



The project registered 7,507 HHs comprising 38,912 beneficiaries in total, to whom food assistance was to be provided through direct distributions of food rations. This is further broken down by gender in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2 Beneficiaries Targeted



The primary status of HHs targeted for food was CAR refugee HHs, and Congolese returnees who were previously displaced by armed conflict, and the most vulnerable host HHs within the project areas. Approximately 21.1% of assisted HHs were host-community HHs, with preference being given to host families that were especially vulnerable due to chronic illness,

handicap, single-parenting, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors, etc. Samaritan's Purse was able to show gratitude to the food-insecure host communities for their important role in hosting refugees, hence fostering coexistence and peaceful cohabitation between the refugees and host community HHs.

Targeted HHs completed the vulnerability assessment questionnaire during targeting in order to understand their level of vulnerability and food insecurity. Assistance was prioritized for HHs with high food insecurity. Some selected HHs received six cycles of emergency food assistance, while others received lesser rations because the Office de Controle Congolaise (OCC) raised issues over the BUBD dates indicated on the food commodities and the commodities were declared unfit for human consumption by the OCC before all the food commodities could be distributed. **The plan was to provide six food assistance cycles for all the program participants during the life of the award. However, during program implementation, registered participants received varying cycles of food assistance. In Ango Territory, 1,386 HHs received six ration cycles, 930 HHs received four ration cycles, 738 HHs received three ration cycles, and 268 HHs were not served due to their absence during the various food distributions. In Bondo Territory, three HHs received six ration cycles, one HH received four ration cycles, 1,090 HHs received three ration cycles, one HH received two food assistance cycles, and 1,019 HHs received one food assistance cycle.**

ii. Procurement of Food Commodities

A total of 3,015.96 MT of food commodities were procured regionally from Uganda as follows: 2,160 MT of maize flour, 660 MT of beans, 165.96 MT of vegetable cooking oil, and 30 MT of iodized table salt. Out of these, 3,014.91 MT of food commodities were successfully imported into the country and prepositioned at three warehouses – one in Dungu, one in Isiro, and the other in Ango, ready for distribution to the refugee, returnee, and host HHs. All the procured food was delivered in the country intact, without any damages recorded. The procured commodities were inspected upon arrival for commodity safety and quality assurance and subsequent certificates were issued with inspection results. A further breakdown of the inspection results including aflatoxin levels and moisture content can be found in *Annex A*. As previously reported to USAID, a total of 1.05 MT of commodities retained by the OCC for quality testing at the Uganda and DRC border and were never returned.

The assorted tools were also regionally procured from Uganda and these were comprised of hand hoes, pickaxes, spades, axes, watering cans, and rasp files. The farming seeds were procured locally from seed vendors who were approved and controlled by SENASEM. The vendors supported the provision of 27.18 MT of assorted seeds – namely rice, beans, maize, and groundnuts – to the beneficiaries.

iii. Emergency Food Assistance

The program targeted to provide food assistance to 10,000 HHs (60,000 beneficiaries) impacted negatively by conflicts, resulting inhuman displacements from CAR, and subsequent food and seed insecurity. The HHs were targeted for assistance with six rations of food – each ration being able to support the nutritional needs of a HH size of six for 15 days. A total of 984.55 MT of food commodities were provided to a total of 24,828 food insecure beneficiaries in the territories of Ango and Bondo in Bas-Uele Province of DRC over the project duration.

iv. Agriculture Support – Seeds and Tools

In order to improve the capacity of conflict-affected HHs to produce diversified food aimed at improving their agriculture-based food security, the project provided increased access to agricultural inputs – including seeds, tools and training. Assorted farming seeds (maize, rice, beans, and groundnuts) were procured from the seed vendors who were approved and controlled by SENASEM. A total of 27.18 MT of seeds were distributed to 3,000 HHs representing 20,798 individuals who had access to farming land and were also willing to engage in farming. Additionally, vegetable seeds (tomato, eggplant, cabbage, carrot, and onion) were provided to families to improve diet diversification. Samaritan's Purse utilized the Agricultural Training Group (ATG) approach for providing essential farming information. Altogether 2,897 HHs were trained in improved farming practices, comprised of 1,232 refugee HHs, 875 returnee HHs, and 790 local host HHs. Throughout the lifetime of the project, agronomist staff monitored the ATGs and their respective nurseries to provide on-site mentoring and advice, and help ATGs deal with issues as they arose.

3. Project Activities, Outputs, and Results

i. Total Number of People Targeted and Reached, Disaggregated by Sex and Age

The project facilitated the provision of food assistance to 24,828 beneficiaries, including 11,153 refugees (2,095 HHs), through direct distributions of food rations in the two territories of Ango and Bondo in Bas-Uele Province. This was lower than the planned target of 60,000 beneficiaries (10,000 HHs) and can be attributed to the mobile nature of the refugees and insecurity in certain areas like Zapay, where a large number of refugees lived. This location was only 5 km away from the CAR border, which made the population difficult for the SP survey team to reach, due to proximity with the conflict zones. Overall, the beneficiaries who accessed food comprised 11,099 males and 13,729 females.

Table 1: Beneficiaries Served with Food, Disaggregated by Age and Gender

Total number of people targeted and reached, disaggregated by sex and age (0-6 months, 7-23 months, 24-59 months, 5-14 years, 15-49 years, 50-60 years, and 60+ years)							
Age/ Category	Refugee		Returnee		Host		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
0-6 m	49	34	35	33	20	19	190
7-23 m	156	594	130	317	67	185	1,449
24-59 m	546	1,324	448	851	311	538	4,018
5-14 years	1,339	2,470	1,156	1,694	712	1,121	8,492
15-49 years	2,006	1,669	1,377	1,207	849	800	7,908
50-60 years	407	194	353	174	284	137	1,549
60+	279	86	307	149	268	133	1,222
Reached	4,782	6,371	3,806	4,425	2,511	2,933	24,828
Planned	18,000	18,000	9,000	9,000	3,000	3,000	60,000

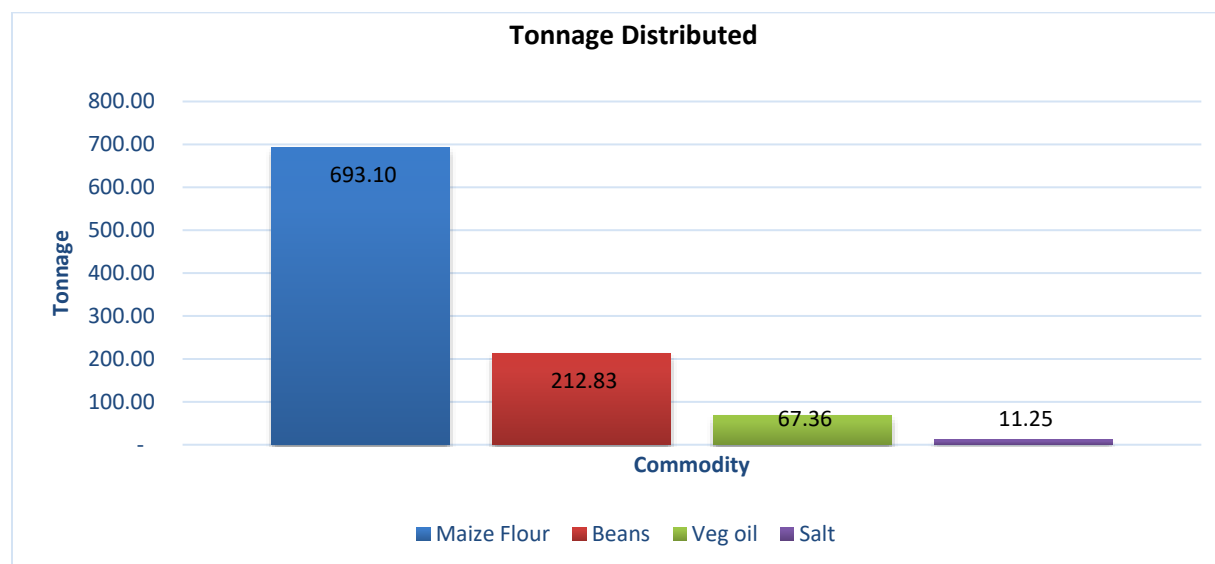
Samaritan's Purse tracked the exact number of people benefiting from food assistance by detailing the actual HH sizes and ages of beneficiaries served. This data was first obtained through the beneficiary recruitment process, which captured beneficiary biodata and HH profiles. Daily Distribution Reports (DDR) were used to track HHs receiving food assistance as well as seeds. It is important to note here that although FFP does not consider children <6 months of age when calculating the number of people assisted, SP tracked this number because project objectives established in the award proposal were based on the national average HH size of 6, which includes children <6 months of age. Therefore, the total of 24,828 individuals assisted includes children <6 months old.

ii. Total Number of Metric Tons of Food Distributed

Given that all the procured food was imported into the country, it was planned to distribute all 3,015.96 MT of food to 60,000 beneficiaries. However, only 984.55 MT of food (32.60% of all food rations) were provided to beneficiaries through direct distribution. The food ration distributed consisted of 36 kg of maize flour, 11 kg of beans, 2.76 L of vegetable cooking oil, and 0.5 kg of iodized table salt. This was because the OCC raised issues over the BUBD dates indicated on the food commodities and the commodities were declared unfit for human consumption by the OCC and therefore recommended for disposal. Further details regarding the challenges that led to the disposition of the food commodities are provided in the lessons

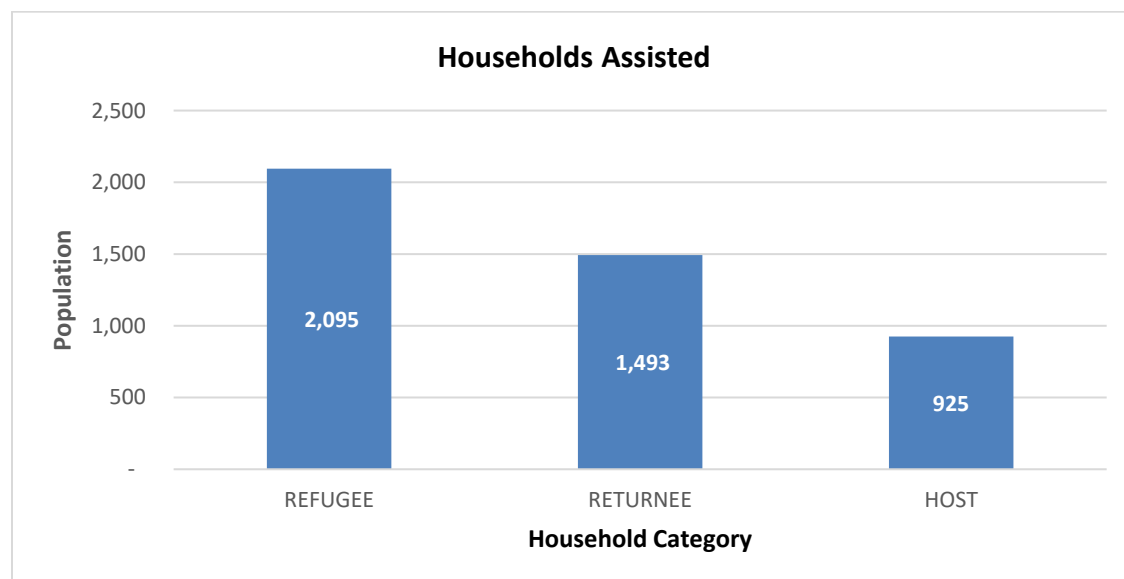
learned section as well as within the section titled *Quantity of Commodities Lost by Type, Value and Reason of Loss*.

Figure 4: Total Tonnage Distributed



Over the project period, a total of 4,513 HHs comprised of 24,828 individuals (11,099 males and 13,729 females) received their food rations. By category, these were 11,153 refugees (4,782 males, 6,371 females), 8,231 returnees (3,806 males, 4,425 females) and 5,444 host individuals (2,511 males, 2,933 females).

Figure 5: Households Served



Data was collected from potential beneficiaries in a disaggregated manner to guarantee that priority was given to the most vulnerable groups, including women with young children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Lists were shared and cross-checked with DRC National Refugee Committee/ CAR refugee registration lists in consultation with the refugee committees, civil society organizations and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (including ACTED), and church groups who have worked in the targeted areas.

iii. **Actual Average Cost per Beneficiary and Average Cost per Beneficiary per Month**

The actual total cost per beneficiary for the FFP food was calculated by taking the food costs and dividing them by the number of beneficiaries served. The project served 1,105 HHs with 984.55 MT of food assistance, so in order to calculate the cost per HH, the total distributed commodity cost was divided by the number of HHs. In order to estimate the cost per beneficiary, this number was further divided by six, assuming the national average family size of six.

In-Kind Food Costs: Cost per beneficiary in direct food distributions was \$22.63, and average cost per HH was \$124.49 for food assistance received throughout the project duration, against a planned target of \$10.26 per individual beneficiary and \$61.57 per HH per month for the six food cycles, respectively.

Farming Seeds Costs: Cost per beneficiary in the local seeds fairs was \$29.89 for cereal seeds and \$4.87 for vegetable seeds, against a planned target of \$30 for cereal seeds and \$10

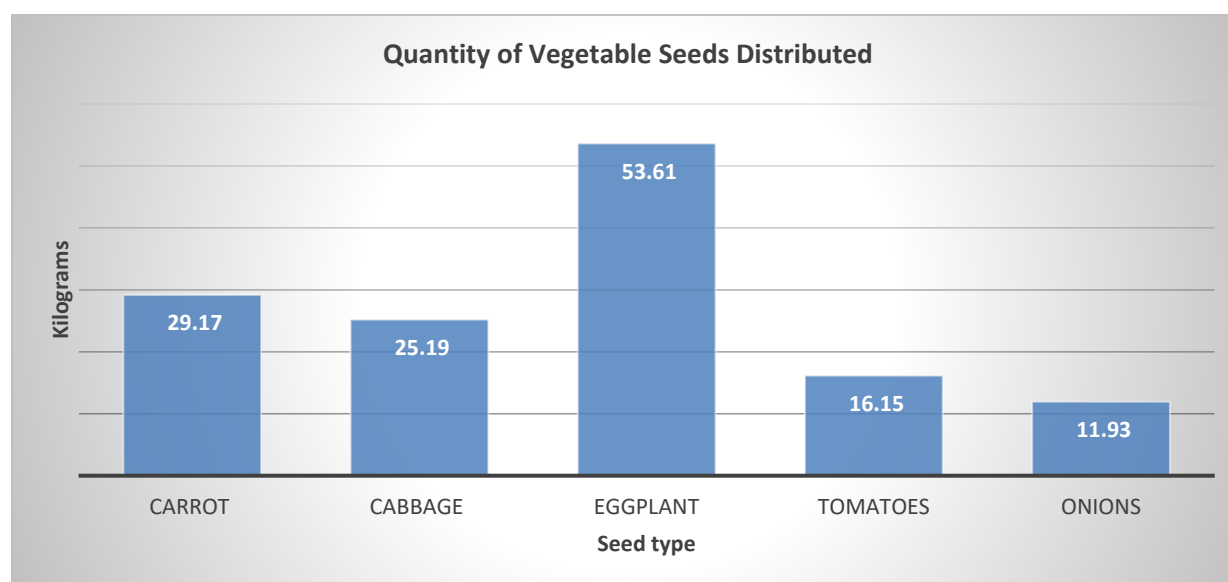
for vegetable seeds per beneficiary. The project was able to provide seed assistance to the project beneficiaries as planned.

iv. Complementary Activity - Agriculture

In order to improve the capacity of conflict-affected HHs to produce diversified food to improve their agriculture-based food security, the project provided increased access to agricultural inputs. The project used a fair modality in order to provide access to seeds for targeted HHs. Following the call for tenders to the vendors in Ango, Bili, Bambesa, and Dingila, the vendors in Dingila who were registered under SENASEM supplied the seeds. Seed fairs were conducted in Ango Center and Mboti Camp, as well as along the Gwane - Sukadi/Assa, Digba, and Bili - Adama axes, and in Basokpio, and Bulumasi in the intervention zones of Ango and Bondo Territories. Samaritan's Purse facilitated virtual seed fairs in the sites, serving as needs assessments- the information gained from the preference of the beneficiaries was used in mobilizing the government-approved seed vendors. Assorted farming seeds which included (maize, rice, beans, and groundnuts) were procured from the seed vendors who are approved and controlled by the local seed quality assurance body- 'SENASEM'. A total of 27.18 MTs of seeds were distributed to 3,000 HHs representing 20,798 individuals who had access to farming land and were also willing to engage in farming.

The 3,000 HHs also received assorted vegetable seeds through distributions. Of those who received vegetable seeds, 1,554 were refugee HHs, 899 returnee HHs, and 547 host HHs. A total of 136.05 kg of seeds including 53.61 kg of eggplant, 25.19 kg of cabbage, 29.17 kg of carrot, 11.93 kg of onion, and 16.15 kg of tomato seeds were distributed.

Figure 6: Vegetable Seeds Distributed, in Kilograms



The participants were also introduced to the different tools to use in vegetable gardening as a potential source of income, using previously flooded areas where water had receded, as the saturated soil was found to be useful for vegetable cultivation. In total, 2,977 HHs out of the 3,000 targeted received farming tools (i.e., 1,575 female heads of HH and 1,402 male heads of HH). In total, 20,625 individuals received farming tools, (9,974 men and 10,651 women). Each HH received a hand hoe, an axe, a pickaxe, a watering can, five rasp files, and a spade. The following figures show the distribution of tools to HHs along the different intervention axes.

Figure 7: Tools Distributed in the Ango-Gwane Axis⁶

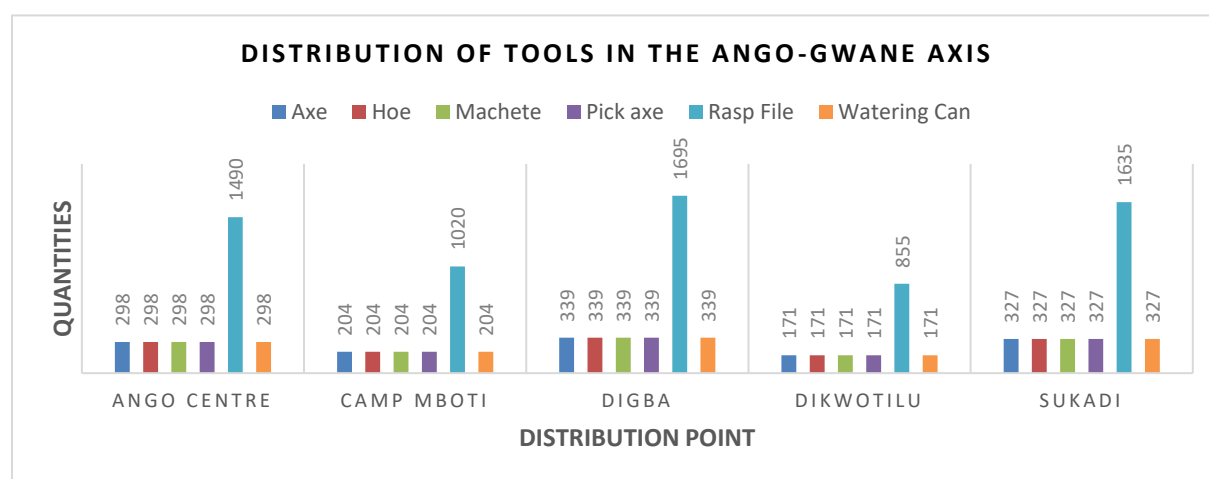
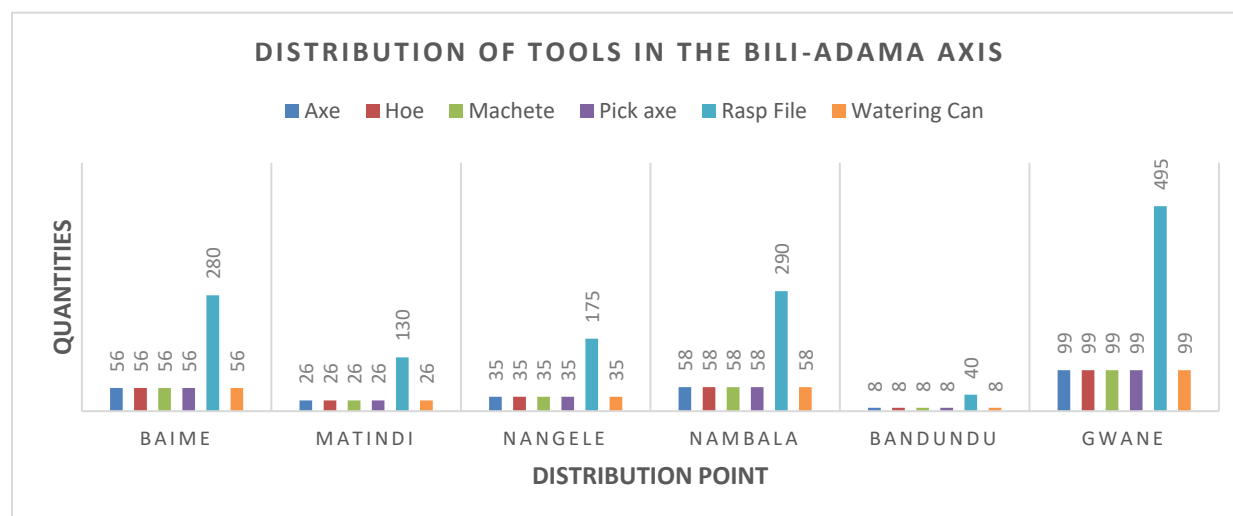
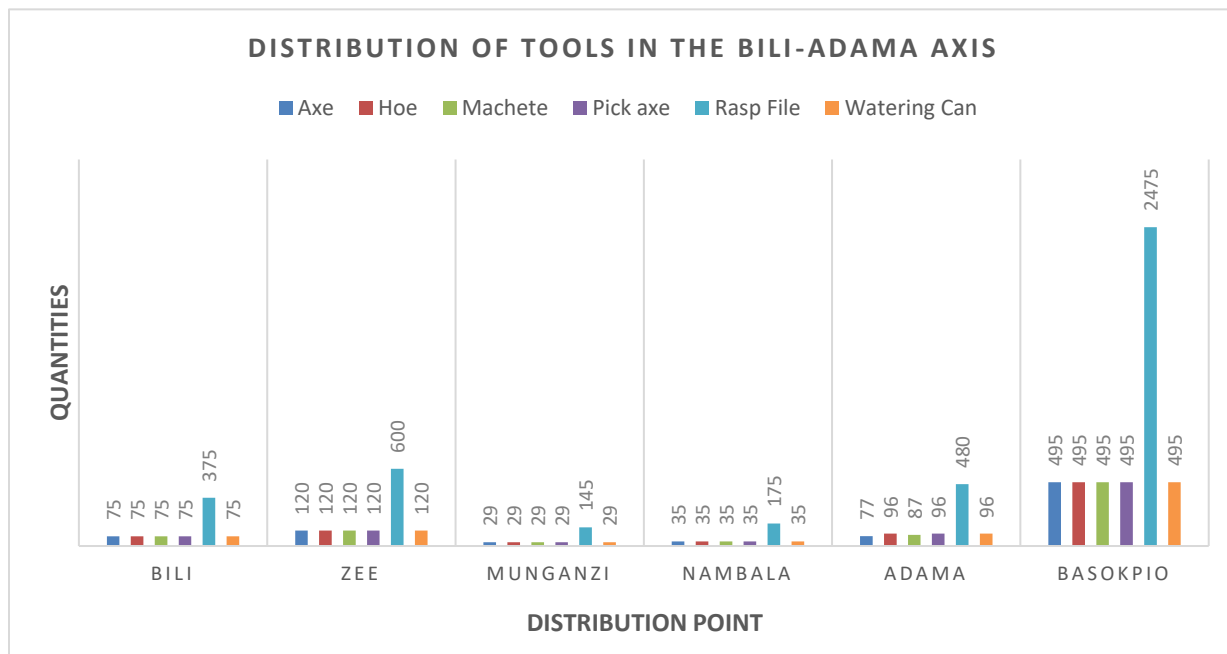


Figure 8: Distribution of Tools in the Bili-Adama Axis



⁶ Each HH received the same number of tools which included: one axe, one hoe, one machete, one pickaxe, one watering can and five rasp files for sharpening the tools.

Figure 9: Continuation of Distribution of Tools in the Bili-Adama Axis



v. Training through Agriculture Training Groups (ATGs)

In order to improve the food security of the conflict-affected HHs, it was planned to train 3,000 HHs in improved farming practices. A total of 86 ATGs, each having an average of 35-37 member HHs (depending on the population of the village in which they were located), were formed so as to have smaller groups for ease of dissemination of the agricultural training to the participants. The ATG methodology introduced aimed to provide a way for communities to work as teams for the benefit of their individual HHs, and provide an avenue for SP agricultural field staff to provide training and follow-up monitoring. Trainings conducted benefited a total of 20,625 individuals against the planned target of 18,000 individuals. This is explained by the fact that certain HHs had more than the average six members used during planning estimates. The topics covered included cultivation techniques like ground selection and preparation, setting up and maintaining nursery beds, transplanting seedlings, tending to the seedlings, crop diseases and means of control, fertilizer preparation and application, and harvesting techniques. During the trainings, demonstration vegetable nurseries were established within each ATG and, subsequently, each HH established their own kitchen gardens. Trainings also focused on the role of vegetables in human nutrition, and the use of certain crop residues as livestock feed.

Altogether, 2,897 HHs were trained in improved farming practices, comprised of 1,232 refugee HHs, 875 returnee HHs, and 790 local host HHs. Throughout the lifetime of the project,

agronomist staff monitored ATGs and their respective nurseries. The aim of monitoring visits was to provide support and clarification to HHs and ATGs on agricultural techniques, as well as to ensure implementation adherence. The monitoring visits also sought to address the challenges experienced in transplantation of seedlings from the nurseries to individual HH gardens. The rising water levels at the onset of the rainy season disrupted vegetable planting for a few ATGs, and a portion of the seedlings in their nurseries were destroyed by the heavy rains. Samaritan's Purse's technical staff worked with the HHs to provide additional guidance on the timing of seed planting, including identifying good areas for planting during the rainy season. The targeted refugees are not stationary and are always on the move in search of livelihood opportunities, making it difficult to plan and carry through with distributions. This was addressed by communicating distribution dates ahead of time through the local leadership and refugee committees. Potential violence against women in their travels to and from their fields or gardens was mitigated by the introduction of ATGs. The formation of ATGs enabled the women to work in groups and promoted their safety as they were able to travel to and from their fields in groups rather than individually.

During vulnerability targeting, SP found that the average number of months of HH food self-sufficiency was 0.875; however, at the project endline, sampled HHs had an average of 2.5 months of food self-sufficiency, which is a 1.6-month increase from baseline. The training on improved agricultural production as well as the provision of seeds and tools most likely contributed to this improvement among targeted HHs.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies and Tools

The project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy differed by sector during the program; in particular, the strategy differed between the Food Security and Agriculture Sectors. The food distributions and agricultural activities were implemented differently with the same beneficiaries, and therefore had different M&E strategies throughout the program.

i. Data Collection

Samaritan's Purse DRC used paper questionnaires for data collection throughout the project. It was not possible to collect data using iPads because of their limited availability, which would have slowed down the data collection process. The data collected using questionnaires was then extracted directly into Excel for analysis. Data entry errors associated with the manual entry of paper surveys were mitigated by engaging experienced data entry staff as well as M&E staff to verify and clean the data after it was entered into Excel for analysis. This enabled SP staff to cross-reference the family information and helped ensure that the representative present during distributions was the selected beneficiary and not an imposter who was not registered.

ii. Rationale of Indicator Collection and Tracking

Samaritan's Purse conducted vulnerability assessments in each of the two intervention territories of Ango and Bondo. One inclusive vulnerability assessment questionnaire was used for the two sectors. The assessment served the dual purpose of providing respondent vulnerability information for program recruitment, and baseline data on project indicators for comparison with values at the end of the program. Beneficiaries were recruited based on food insecurity levels and beneficiaries reporting poor to moderate food security scores were registered for assistance.

The program conducted post-distribution monitoring (PDM) surveys in each of the two territories. The assessments were conducted at each site at the end of the intervention. The PDMs served as endline surveys for each of the territories, providing information on each of the tracked indicators.

Baseline indicator values obtained during vulnerability assessments were then compared with the PDM indicator values to understand the impact of the program on the lives of the beneficiaries (findings discussed herein). Other quantitative and qualitative data necessary for tracking project indicators were similarly collected through questionnaires compiled on a location-by-location basis and analyzed.

iii. Methodology of Indicator Collection and Tracking

Data collection and storage was the joint effort of both the M&E and the program team. Whereas the program prioritized the tracking of the committed indicators, additional SP-based indicators were tracked and analyzed in conformity with internal SP M&E standards. A detailed breakdown of the performance indicators for the program can be found in the annex: Indicator Tracking Table.

iv. Quantitative Data Collection Sources

The Food Sector derived its indicator data from different sources, which included vulnerability surveys, beneficiary preference studies, rapid market assessments, daily distribution reports, waybills, and PDM surveys.

Vulnerability Surveys

Vulnerability assessment conducted in each territory of intervention enabled data collection which was analyzed to understand the vulnerability status of the HHs. The vulnerability assessment data provided information for understanding the baseline status of the recruited beneficiaries for comparison with endline values.

Targeting reached only about 195 HHs/day. This involved working with community leaders to identify vulnerable HHs, surveying those HHs, and then cleaning and analyzing the data to assess comparative vulnerability. Households that exhibited vulnerability in either food or seeds were retained as beneficiaries for both sectors based on their levels of food and seed vulnerability. The most vulnerable HHs were prioritized for humanitarian assistance.

Indicator-related data gathered during the targeting phase for food and seeds beneficiaries included age and gender breakdowns for each HH, HH status (refugee, returnee, host), length and duration of displacement, current living conditions, social vulnerability (women/child heads-of-household, handicapped), primary source of income, food insecurity, and seed vulnerability.

In order to remain in line with the regional cluster standards, the project adapted the DRC Food Security Cluster's questionnaires so as to capture all the program indicators. The cluster scoring system was used in assessing vulnerability.

For the Food Sector, the project adopted the DRC Food Security Cluster's scoring system, which uses FCS results to assign each HH a *Sécal* or Food Security Score, similarly weighted on a 0-5 scale. Samaritan's Purse adhered to regional cluster standards to determine acute vulnerability by prioritizing assistance for those HHs that had Food Security Scores of 3.5 or higher.

Other baseline indicators for both activities were also evaluated during the targeting phase. Vulnerability information collected during targeting was compared to endline data after the final intervention to evaluate assistance impact.

Market Analysis and Surveillance

No market price surveillance was carried out to establish the current commodity prices within the project area. The prices per metric ton for the regionally purchased commodities (in USD), two weeks before procurement, were as follows:

Table 2: Commodity Prices Prior to and at Procurement

Commodity	Two weeks prior	At procurement
Maize flour	\$395	\$427
Beans	\$660	\$795
Vegetable oil	\$1,390	\$1,390
Salt	\$269	\$269

Daily Distribution Reports⁷

One of the most important performance indicators for assessing project objectives and achievements for food distributions was the numbers reached, including both the number of HHs served disaggregated by status, and the age/gender breakdown of each family registered. Tracking these indicators allowed SP to produce accurate reports on the number of people assisted with food and seeds.

At the end of each day, the Database Officers collected all the distribution data. Numbers were compared with the waybill statistics. These sources were then compiled into a DDR which clearly presented the number of HHs assisted, allowing program leadership to accurately report on the tonnage of food planned and distributed on a given day.

Post-Distribution Monitoring Surveys⁸

Post Distribution Monitoring surveys were done at the intervention sites where the food and seeds were distributed. The surveys were aimed to be conducted within 30 days of the last distribution. The survey in Bili – Adama was done within the timeframe, while the survey in Digba – Gwane was slightly delayed due to accessibility challenges between the two territories of Ango and Bondo. The two are located on opposite axes that encounter flooding, and the same team had to complete one location and then move on to the next.

The surveys employed individual questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The survey questions remained the same as those used during vulnerability assessment. They also included sections that collected information on beneficiary opinions of the program team and the overall intervention, including but not limited to the quality of commodities provided and level of cooperation exhibited between SP staff and the community.

The PDM surveys and FGDs served two purposes. First, the quantitative data collected was analyzed and compared to baseline (targeting) scores for the three principle numerical indicators including FCS, HHS and rCSI. Changes between baseline pre-intervention and post-intervention scores demonstrated the impact of the project at each location. Secondly, the qualitative data collected gave program leadership an insight into how the project beneficiaries who received assistance appreciated the interventions and what could be improved for future interventions.

⁷ “Daily Distribution Reports” refers to tools created for the tracking and reporting of key indicators immediately after an intervention. It does not only refer to data collected at distributions, but also that from voucher fairs.

⁸ Although this is called Post Distribution Monitoring, it refers to the endline monitoring of both distribution and agricultural activities.

v. Qualitative Data Collection Sources

For food distribution activities, data sources included FGDs, Day-of Evaluations, and PDM surveys. According to the proposal document, food distribution did not explicitly require tracking of qualitative data. However, in view of SP DRC norms, as well as the fact that seeds were provided as a complementary assistance to food, the same qualitative data was collected for both.

Focus Group Discussions

Samaritan's Purse conducted semi-structured FGDs during every food distribution, starting with the initial exploratory missions through to the final PDM assessments. Women and men were interviewed in separate groups to allow the team to more freely access information from the different groups. The objective of these FGDs was to ensure that local communities, and the vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs) (including women, youth, and the elderly), were given a platform to express themselves and be involved in program implementation. These FGDs further helped ensure that SP's interventions appropriately assessed gender needs and issues, and that there was effective learning on the appropriateness of selected modalities and activities in each context.

Complaints Monitoring and Management

In each community where SP intervened, the intervention teams worked with community leadership in establishing complaints management committees, with each intervention site having established a committee. These committees were typically composed of six local community members, including representatives from the chief's council, civil society, refugee committee, returnee committee, local women, and youth groups. This process was facilitated by the sector's M&E Officer. If any community member had a complaint or question, he/she contacted a member of this committee to explain his/her situation. The committee member then completed a complaint form explaining the situation and recommending an action. This was presented to the M&E Officer, who then evaluated each complaint on a case-by-case basis. The project also provided a locked suggestion box at each intervention site.

Day-of Evaluations

During each distribution activity, SP gathered qualitative data through "Day-of Evaluations" that targeted both beneficiaries and, in the case of seed fairs, participating local vendors. Surveyors were posted at the exit point of the distribution or fair site, where they randomly sampled exiting beneficiaries, asking them a series of questions related to the quality of the intervention. Information collected captured the status of the site (water, shade, security, and accessibility), the thoroughness of mobilization (whether participants had enough information and how they received it), beneficiary satisfaction with the distribution rations, and details regarding the seeds (quality and quantity of seeds received, prices during the fair, etc.). Day-of evaluations also gave

beneficiaries a chance to give any recommendations they might have had regarding gender needs and issues, and/or the appropriateness of selected modalities and activities.

In the case of seed fairs, all participating vendors were also surveyed with a vendor-specific Day-of Evaluation in order to gather information concerning how they brought their supplies to the fair, how they received information, the appropriateness of pricing in the fairs (did they raise or lower prices), and their opinions and recommendations regarding how the fairs progressed.

After-Action Review Meetings

At the end of every distribution day, the field teams held After-Action Reviews (AARs) to evaluate the day's activities and discuss the successes and challenges of implementation, adaptations needed to changing circumstances, and/or unintended consequences of program activities. Together, the teams laid out what went well and what could be improved, with discussion being documented in the DDR. The following day, the suggestions and recommendations were implemented in order to meet the need or gap that was expressed.

vi. Time from Donor-Signed Agreement to Distribution to Beneficiaries

As per FFP requirements, the time between the various stages of procurement and distribution was tracked for each commodity procurement. For the first distribution sites (Ango Center and Mboti Camp), tracking was done for the period between signing of the agreement on the September 27, 2018 and the first intervention in the sites on December 16, 2019. However, the tenders for the food commodities were not awarded until March 20, 2019 and the first batch of commodities was received in country on August 29, 2019. For the rest of the sites, distributions only began in March 2020, after commodity deliveries resumed following the repair of the broken ferry on River Bomokandi, the only means by which food could be delivered to the project area from the stores in Dungu and Isiro.

The program targeted to provide quick humanitarian assistance to the conflict-impacted HHs, providing intervention in less than 90 days for direct food distribution. The first food distribution was, however, only possible eight months after signing the supply tenders due to a breakdown of the only ferry by which the food commodities could be delivered to the project areas from the SP managed warehouses. The program thus did not successfully manage to meet its objective of providing rapid humanitarian intervention to the conflict-affected HHs, as planned.

vii. Quantity of Commodities Lost by Type, Value and Reason of Loss

During commodity importation, 1.05 MT of commodities were lost by the OCC when the commodities were taken for quality testing and never returned to SP. Also, despite the attentiveness and care in food handling between the warehouse and the distribution sites, an additional 2.99 MT of maize flour were spoiled in the course of the transportation of food commodities to the distribution site in Bili. During transportation, 83 bags of maize flour got wet when the transportation truck was submerged in water.

The food commodities had the risk of getting wet despite the elaborate protection measures in place, which included covering the food with tarps, because the deep potholes filled with water through which the trucks carrying food commodities had to drive increased this risk. The overall value in commodity losses described above is estimated at \$1,770.79.

Table 3: Food Commodities Lost by Type and Value

Commodity Type	Quantity in MT	Unit	Unit Cost \$ per MT	Total Cost \$	Location of Damage
Maize flour	2.99	Bags	427.00	1,275.88	In transit to Bili
Maize flour	0.94	Bags	427.00	401.38	At the border
Beans	0.10	Bags	795.00	79.50	At the border
Veg oil	0.01	Cartons	1,390.00	13.90	At the border
Salt	0.005	Sachet	269.00	0.13	At the border
	4.045			1,770.79	

As previously reported to USAID, In July 2020, food commodity samples were forwarded to the Office Congolais de Controle (OCC) for routine testing. The best used before dates (BUBD) indicated on some of the food commodities were approaching, but based on previous testing, SP did not have any concerns about the quality of the food commodities. The OCC raised issues over the BUBD dates indicated on the food commodities and issued a lab analysis report on July 22, 2020 and a letter recommending that 57,957 sacks/cartons or 2,058.65 MT of the food commodities in the warehouses be returned to the vendor or destroyed. Before receiving the analysis and while these samples were being analyzed by the OCC, SP distributed 574.31 MT of commodity. At the end of September, an additional 377.60 MT of commodities also reached their BUBD and will also require disposition as they can no longer be distributed, as per the OCC. As previously reported in a notification letter sent to USAID on October 6,

2020, there was 156.92 MT of maize flour found with an expiry date of February 2021 as well as 12.12 MT of salt that remain to be distributed. During transit, the OCC in Kinsangani, Tshopo Province, however, requested that the food be re-tested and it was recommended that the maize flour not be distributed as the OCC in Kinsangani deemed it not fit for human consumption. The OCC in Kinsangani seized 90 MT of maize flour and prevented SP from adding them to the other tonnage that requires disposition in Isiro, Haut Uele Province. This 90 MT was later disposed of by the OCC in Kinsangani, as detailed in the notification of loss submitted to USAID by SP on November 30, 2020. The remaining 66.92 MT of maize flour has been included in the tonnage to be disposed of in Isiro. The total amount of MT of commodities that will require disposition is approximately 1,928.86 MT with an estimate USD values of \$1,095,960.74 as represented in Table 4 were condemned and recommended for destruction. SP worked with the government authorities that are mandated to dispose of the commodities including, but not limited to, the local OCC, the Environmental Ministry, National Intelligence Agency (Agence National de Reinseignments), local police, and judiciary members, who provided the recommended method for disposition for each commodity.

On January 21, 2021, USAID/BHA provided the approval for SP to dispose of the commodities that were declared unfit for use, and SP proceeded with the disposition of the commodities in both Haut Uele and Bas-Uele Provinces. Disposal of the food commodities began on February 6 and was completed on February 23, 2021. At every scheduled disposal site, an SP staff member was present to oversee the process, along with various members from the appointed committee, to ensure that the food was destroyed as per the approved disposal methods. Overall, SP was able to oversee the disposition process in an efficient manner and has confirmed with the appointed government actors that the following commodities were disposed of, having also received official documentation detailing the tonnage destroyed:

Table 4: Commodities Disposed of in Haut Uele and Base Uele Provinces

Description of Commodity	Quantity (Metric Tons)	Value of Commodity (in USD)	Confirmed Disposal Method
Condemned - Isiro and Dungu - Haut Uele Province			
Maize flour	1,202.858	\$ 513,620.37	Immersion
Beans	386.786	\$ 307,494.87	Immersion
Oil	30.319	\$ 42,143.41	Burned, then buried mixed with soil

Subtotal	1,619.963	\$ 863,258.65	
Condemned - Ango and Bondo – Bas-Uele Province			
Maize flour	178.13	\$ 76,061.51	Immersion
Beans	97.45	\$ 77,472.75	Burning
Oil	56.35	\$ 78,326.50	Burning
Salt	16.81	\$ 4,521.89	Immersion
Subtotal	348.74	\$ 236,382.65	
Grand total	1,968.703		

Table 5: Summary of Deviation from Disposition Request

Description of Commodity	Quantity Disposed (Metric Tons)	Quantity from Disposition Request
Maize flour	1,202.858	1,196.16
Beans	386.786	371.42
Oil	30.319	26.45
Subtotal	1,619.963	1,594.03
Maize flour	178.13	173.61
Beans	97.45	75.75
Oil	56.35	85.47
Salt	16.81	0
Subtotal	348.74	334.83
Grand Total	1,968.703	1,928.86

Total Amount from Disposition Request	1,928.86
Difference	39.843

The variances detailed above are due to several factors. During the on-loading of commodities, additional bags of commodities were found that had previously been unaccounted for, resulting in additional MT of maize flour, beans, and oil being disposed of. Several sacks of commodities were torn during storage due to normal wear and tear, making it difficult to accurately estimate the tonnage while the warehouses were full. It was during the disposition process, when these contents were repackaged in new sacks to help in transportation, that the total tonnage was determined. In addition, the MT of beans estimated in the original disposition request in Bas-Uele did not include approximately 22 MT of beans that had been in transit from Ango to Bondo and were delayed as the only ferry was non-functional for a long period of time. Also, SP had intended to distribute salt to beneficiaries in Bas-Uele Province, as the salt had not been previously condemned; however, there was resistance from the disposition committee members, specifically the OCC and Environmental Ministry members, who insisted that the salt also had to be destroyed via immersion. Another compounding issue was that, in most communities, there was minimal acceptance of a salt distribution without the accompanying food rations. The differences in the vegetable oil destroyed in Bas-Uele can be attributed to several factors, including an erroneously high estimation of the remaining MT at the time of the disposition request submission; the fact that fragile jerry cans cracked and a large quantity of vegetable oil was lost and could not be recovered prior to disposal; and an estimated 3.02 MT of vegetable oil having been stolen from the SP warehouse.

viii. Increase in Beneficiaries' FCS

The FCS measures the frequency of consumption of different food groups by a HH, as well as their different sources, seven days before the survey. Each food is assigned a weight based on its nutritional value, meaning that the larger the score, the more food secure the HH is. The table below shows the World Food Programme (WFP) global thresholds applied in measuring FCS, and the thresholds applied in DRC (WFP accepted FCS limits for DRC) which were used by the project.

Table 6: Food Consumption Score Ranges

Food consumption thresholds		
Thresholds	Global WFP threshold	DRC WFP threshold
Poor	0 to 21	0 to 28
Borderline	21.5 to 35	28.5 to 42

Acceptable	> 35	> 42
------------	------	------

During the project period, distributions were completed in Ango Center, Mboti Camp, Bili-Basokpio, and Digba-Gwane axes of Ango and Bondo Territories, serving a total of 4,513 HHs. Vulnerability assessments conducted during beneficiary targeting showed HHs at these sites had an average FCS of 21.33.⁹ Vulnerability assessments showed that 84% of the population surveyed had a poor FCS and 13% had a borderline FCS, indicating a high level of food insecurity. At the time of the Ango Center PDM, the total surveyed HHs had an average FCS of 31.74, with 73% of surveyed HHs reporting a borderline FCS while 5% of HHs having an acceptable FCS.¹⁰ At the time of the Bili and Gwane axis PDM, all surveyed HHs had an average FCS of 31.46, 79% of surveyed HHs were reporting borderline FCS while 2% of HHs having an acceptable FCS. Vulnerability targeting found that 87% of the HHs had a moderate or severe HHS before the intervention (Figure 5); after the intervention in these reached areas, the PDMs found that the prevalence of moderate and severe HHS had decreased to 21%¹¹. In general, SP's interventions contributed to an overall reduction of food insecurity across all indicators.

ix. Decrease in HHS of Beneficiaries

The HHS is a simplified survey used to quickly assess food quantity in any given situation. Whereas the FCS questions examine the frequency and quality of the food, the HHS studies the quantity of food available. Questions are asked to determine whether the HH experienced hunger in the past 30 days, and if so, how often. Possible answers include: rarely (1-2 times during the month), sometimes (3-10 times), and frequently (10 or more times). These scores are weighted to fall onto a 0-6 scale, where 0-1 shows minimum hunger, 2-3 reveals moderate HH hunger and scores higher than 4 suggest severe HH hunger. Samaritan's Purse has also adopted the use of the HHS system to complement the rCSI score. Whereas the CSI examines the most commonly used coping strategies over the past week, the HHS examines the use of the most severe strategy (i.e., not eating) over the course of a month. In pairing these two evaluations, SP has been able to triangulate information on both food insecurity and project impact, by not limiting evaluations to one week and by using multiple scoring systems to best capture the HHs' situation.

Vulnerability targeting found that 87% of the HHs had a moderate and severe HHS prior to the intervention (Figure 5). After the intervention in the Ango Centre area, the PDM found that the prevalence of moderate and severe HHS had decreased to 69% while in the Bili-Gwane axis,

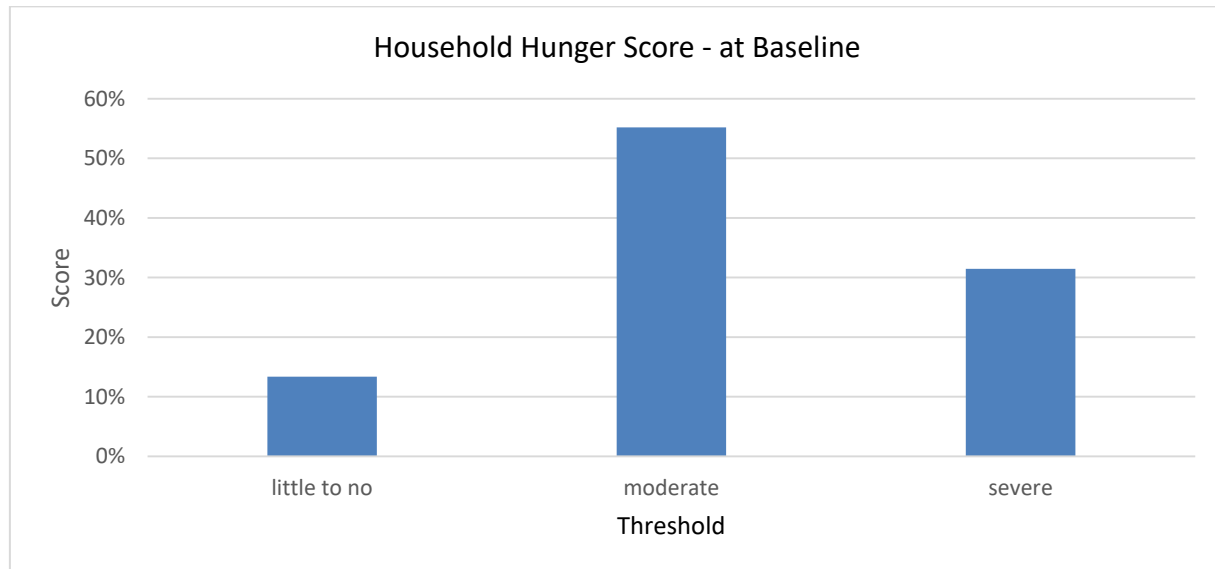
⁹ Average from vulnerability targeting. Please note that instead of measuring a decrease in CSI, the project is only measuring a decrease in rCSI.

¹⁰ Samaritan's Purse PDM report, May 2020.

¹¹ Please note that the PDMs measure different populations.

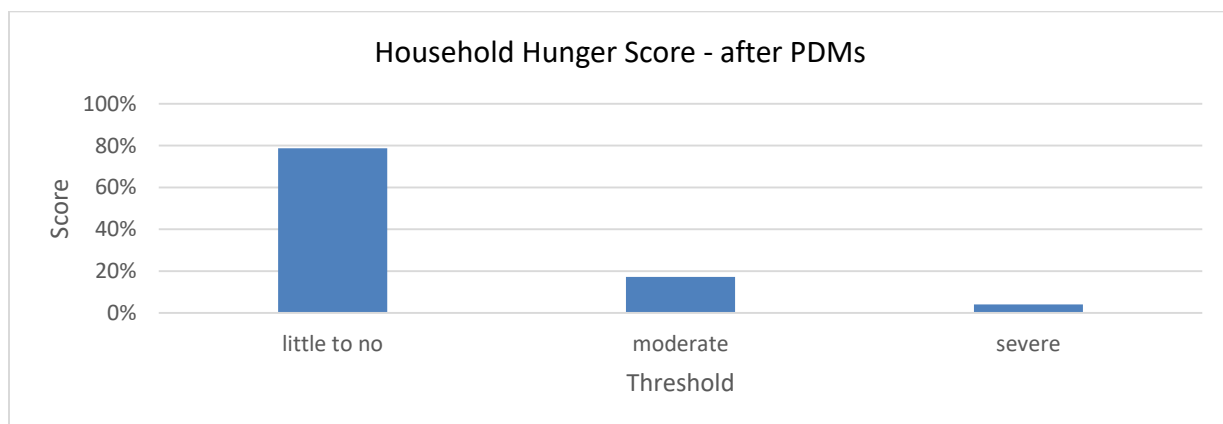
the prevalence was at 15%. In general, SP's interventions contributed to an overall reduction in food insecurity across all indicators.

Figure 10: Household Hunger Score – at Baseline



In general, the program succeeded in reducing the average HHS for the beneficiaries to below 2. Beneficiaries were moved from “moderate/severe” hunger to “little to no” hunger as a result of the program activities. During targeting (baseline) surveys, intervention sites presented an average score of 4.99, indicating that the majority of HHs were experiencing “moderate,” bordering on “severe” hunger. Through SP’s emergency food interventions, the average HHS score across intervention sites was reduced by 3.70 points to 1.30, signifying little or no hunger for the beneficiaries.

Figure 11: Household Hunger Score – after PDM 1&2



x. Decrease in Beneficiaries' rCSI Score

Vulnerability assessments conducted during beneficiary targeting showed HHs at these sites had an average rCSI of 17.68.¹² Post Distribution Monitoring among HHs from Ango Center and Mboti Camp showed a mean rCSI of 13.702, indicating a decrease in harmful coping strategies. Similarly, the second round of PDM conducted for HHs on the Bili-Gwane axis showed a mean rCSI of 10.68.

5. Qualitative Results

Since the food and seeds were received by the same beneficiaries, the qualitative data collected and analyzed was almost entirely applicable to both activities. The qualitative indicators have thus been explained together here.

Project Assessment of Gender Needs and Issues and How They Have Been Addressed

The assessment of gender needs, issues, and their implication for the program started during the proposal development and continued throughout the implementation of the program. Some of the issues identified and addressed included:

i. Beneficiary Targeting-Selection of HH Representatives:

During beneficiary registration, women were given priority as HH representatives in the presence of their husbands. During all distribution events, special attention was accorded to beneficiaries with special needs such as pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, elderly people, and people living with a chronic illness or disability. These beneficiaries were given priority and accompanied back to their homes by SP field staff.

When setting up the complaints management committees for the distributions, at least two out of the six members who comprised the committee were women and, in many cases, there were three women serving on the committee. Additionally, in all meetings with beneficiary representatives, at least 40% of the representatives were required to be women.

This was based on the fact that women played significant roles in the distribution sites with regard to decisions on food security for the entire HH. The food tokens were handed to the women, hence providing women with more control over the active participation of their HHs in the humanitarian assistance program. Since this was done in the presence of their husbands, they were comfortable with this arrangement and it did not expose the women to any risk. No

¹² Average from vulnerability targeting. Please note that instead of measuring a decrease in CSI, the project is only measuring a decrease in rCSI.

known case of harm to the women as a result of their active participation in the program was reported.

Women-based preference studies: To understand the beneficiary preferences for seeds provided through local fairs, SP facilitated consumer preference studies in each of the intervention sites prior to each local fair. By default, women in the project sites (Ango and Bondo Territories of DRC) played a critical role in food purchasing and preparation – hence the program intentionally conducted preference studies through FGDs involving at least 60% women participants. No negative impact or complaint was observed from the male beneficiaries.

ii. Protection Concerns and Consideration of Vulnerable Categories:

To comply with “Do No Harm” principles, the distribution sites were located within 2 km of the beneficiaries' homes to reduce the walking distances and time for beneficiaries to access their rations, and to reduce exposure to unsafe or insecure areas where they could possibly be attacked by armed groups. The SP security team in the field approved each distribution site after assessing its security situation in order to not expose the beneficiaries to possible looting of their rations after distributions. The distribution sites were located in secure and accessible spots, in agreement with the beneficiaries and their leadership. Samaritan's Purse further recognized certain vulnerable categories of beneficiaries (e.g., pregnant/breastfeeding women, handicapped people, and the elderly), who were provided with priority service and offered shelter and free water as they waited for the distribution set-up process. Samaritan's Purse also installed temporary gender-specific latrines complete with handwashing facilities for all beneficiaries, regardless of vulnerability status.

Furthermore, SP engaged local day-labor to provide special “beneficiary assistance” to accompany and assist individuals who might be unable to carry their food by themselves.

6. Successes

During the project period, 3,015.91 MT of food commodities were successfully imported into the country and prepositioned at three SP managed warehouses – one in Dungu, one in Isiro, and the other in Ango, ready for distribution to the refugee, returnee, and host HHs. All the food was delivered in the country intact, without any damages recorded. The project was able to distribute 983.55 MT, reaching 4,513 targeted HHs, serving 24,848 individuals in Ango and Bondo Territories. Additionally, SP was able to hire a team of experienced staff, both locally and within Ituri. This enabled provision of food assistance to project participants in an organized manner. In addition, there was successful community mobilization which helped in building strong relations with the local community members, leaders and refugee committees, helping to ease SP's work in the project, especially in light of the challenges faced. The HHs that received the full cycles of rations reported that they were satisfied with the distribution

services in terms of timing, communication about the distribution, and the quality and quantities of the commodities received. This was measured at the PDM level after the distributions. Overall, the complementary activity of agriculture was deemed successful as the project was able to provide seeds, tools, and training to 3,000 HHs. At the end of the project, a lessons learned workshop was organized and attended by multiple stakeholders, who brainstormed and dissected the current project in order to derive and document pertinent lessons that could be carried forward to SP's ongoing and incoming projects.

7. Challenges and Adaptations

The project start coincided with the presidential election period in DRC, which delayed the start of activities because project staff had to give time for the elections to take place, and analyze the situation, given the difficulty in predicting the results and potential instability. Despite the project having been scheduled to begin implementation in September 2018, the team did not get to Ango until early the following year. The relative stability of the political situation after the conclusion of elections enabled the set-up of a project base in Ango, and two warehouses in Dungu and Ango, ready to receive the food commodities for distribution to the refugees and returnees. Samaritan's Purse's Security and Safety Team continued to closely monitor the target catchment areas in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and provincial authorities. Cancellation of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights, which were the easiest means of reaching Ango, created a challenge in accessing the project sites and delivering supplies from Bunia.

The increased complexity of the remote operating environment, import delays due to added requirements, and security developments contributed to the delayed project implementation. Thus, the eight-month project duration which included six cycles of food distribution and other activities was not pragmatic, considering that the preliminary set-up requirements before the distributions (such as staff recruitment and training, targeting and beneficiary HH surveys, data entry and analysis, processing and generation of beneficiary lists and their display, physical verification of beneficiary HHs, and production and distribution of tokens) could not be carried out within the same six-month distribution cycle period in addition to food, seeds and tools supplier selection, tender awards, food purchase, and transportation to Ango and the distribution sites. This was addressed by requesting a no-cost extension, which was approved.

Delivery of all 3,015.96 MT of food commodities to the project sites within the required time was not possible due to the inadequate trucking capacity of the contracted transporter in relation to the tonnage of food to be transported. This contractor actually had the biggest fleet

within the region, with trucks that were thought to be well adapted for the difficult terrain within the project area. This impacted the slow commodity movement to Ango. Food distributions on the Digba-Gwane, Bili-Adama, and Baye axes were delayed due to unavailability of secondary transporters and their slow response in delivering food. Continuous interactions through meetings, and follow-up with the transporter via email and phone calls, resulted in the primary transporter providing four additional trucks, which slightly increased the commodity tonnage movement. However, this was still insufficient to move the available quantity of food in a timely manner. To mitigate this, the project team worked closely with the primary transporter to try to find alternative solutions to augment the transport. The project tried to identify potential additional transporters, but the available transporters did not have the capacity to traverse the terrain in the project area, and the project had to work with the existing transporters.

In addition to the poor and limited capacity of the transporters, the road conditions proved extremely challenging. The delivery trucks kept developing mechanical problems and breaking down, which consumed a lot of time. Additionally, the only ferry available to cross the Bamokandi River (110 km from Ango Center) broke down and took months to repair. Due to the oncoming rainy season, the rising water levels led to delays in all activities, particularly food distributions, because food commodity movement from Dungu Territory to Ango was hindered. The program endeavored to distribute food to the implementation sites as soon as the broken ferry was fixed so the refugees could once again receive their food distributions and concentrate on the planned farming activities.

Furthermore, the contracted transporter had to buy fuel in Bunia, Ituri Province, since there was an insufficient supply within the project area in Bas-Uele Province, and the little available fuel was found to be very expensive. One liter of diesel in Bunia cost \$1.22 while in Ango it was \$3.00. This meant that commodity deliveries were halted for a while when the transporter ran out of fuel, because the trucks had to wait for the fuel to be replenished from Bunia, approximately 580 km from Isiro. This was addressed by asking the transporter to stock enough fuel for longer periods; however, the delivery trucks sometimes got stuck on the way, thus delaying fuel delivery and therefore commodity delivery.

Belated procurement of seeds, farm implements, and food for distribution negatively impacted the timing and implementation of project activities. The cereal seeds distribution did not coincide with the local planting season; beneficiaries received seeds after the first planting season ending in July, and only adapted by making use of the second planting season which usually starts in the month of August.

Many participant HHs were nomadic in nature and were in constant movement in search of livelihood opportunities for their families, as well as performing other income-generating

activities like gold mining (in Bondo Territory), hunting wild animals, and fishing in order to meet their daily HH food needs, thus limiting their participation in agriculture trainings. These nomadic HHs traveled very long distances from the villages within Ango Territory to the villages of Bondo Territory and vice versa. Some of the participant beneficiary HHs complained about the delay in food distributions once targeting was done. The project team on the ground addressed this through constant communication with both the beneficiaries and local leadership to help them understand the challenges that the project was facing.

The prolonged rainy seasons caused unusual flooding, which affected some fields and ATG nurseries as well as non-beneficiary farmers in Ango, Gwane, and Bili. This negatively affected crop yields in the territories of Ango and Bondo. The rise of the Uere and Api Rivers caused flooding which hindered staff and vehicles from accessing the project areas. Therefore, activities were only possible in Ango Center and one location located 24 km from Ango Center. Some gardens belonging to HHs benefiting from the Bili and Digba ATGs as well as non-beneficiary HHs were submerged by the flood and were not able to produce yields. The flooding of most of the project locations from the prolonged rains also resulted in water levels reaching as high as the trucks' decks and cabins, totally cutting off access to the project locations via the primary route. An agreement was reached with the food commodity transporter to use an alternative route which was about three times longer than the previous route, but still mostly accessible. It was hoped that the transporter would be able to deliver the remaining food commodities using this alternative route to the distribution points; however, road condition challenges as well as the issue of the BUBDs kept the program from reaching the objectives in full.

Similarly, the security situation in the intervention region was ever-changing. The presence of armed groups and their movements in the region and on the other side of the border, in CAR, sometimes prevented deployment of staff to the project areas. This delayed activity implementation in that field staff had to shelter in place on several occasions and wait for a security clearance before proceeding with activities. This had a negative effect on all activities from beneficiary targeting to food distributions and the agricultural activities.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a presidential directive was issued on March 18, 2020, limiting gatherings of more than 20 persons in the DRC, in order to limit and control the spread of the novel coronavirus. This negatively impacted the program. Because of the restriction and uncertainty regarding when the situation would stabilize, SP sent a suspension of activities notification letter to USAID on March 20, 2020 and was unable to facilitate a successful humanitarian intervention as was planned in March and April 2020. The program made changes to its distribution plan while putting into context the changing dynamics brought in by the pandemic. The program adjusted the distribution plans to serve a maximum of 20 HHs at a time while ensuring social distancing among the recipients. Only HH heads were

called upon to receive food on behalf of their respective HHs. A maximum of 500 HHs were served per day, split into 25 groups of 20 HH representatives each.

8. Lessons Learned

From November 18 to November 19, 2020, the project staff hosted a lessons learned workshop to critically evaluate the project and determine strengths, weaknesses, and improvements that could be made should another such project be undertaken by SP. Overall, the largest lesson learned was the need to increase flexibility and adaptability of the project strategy at the design stage. Since the proposal was written in order to respond to emergency needs, the team was unable to conduct a more thorough needs assessment, which in turn led to an overall design which did not take into account the lack of resilient infrastructure needed to conduct in-kind food distributions. However, at the time of the activity design, SP needed to utilize the in-kind food distribution modality as neither cash nor voucher modalities were viable options in the market, due to the remote nature of the targeted area. However, since the in-kind distribution modality was inflexible, there were significant delays in the project implementation and ultimately oversight in several aspects of the program, as well as a significant loss of commodities and other project resources. Future programming strategies should remain flexible, especially for emergency responses, which will allow activities to adapt to the market conditions, road infrastructure, and availability of suppliers in remote regions like Bas Uele, which are always evolving due to armed groups' (LRA and other groups) activities, heavy rainy seasons affecting accessibility, and the influx of CAR refugees due to instability in their home country.

A multitude of logistical constraints weighed down the project and contributed to missing key project objectives and targets. For example, during the course of implementation, it became apparent that contracted suppliers did not have the needed capacity to support the project, leading to delays in promised services. Samaritan's Purse worked extremely closely with the suppliers to see how to adapt to the many challenges that were encountered, but some of the challenges required complex and time-consuming solutions, further delaying project activities. Future programs will enhance vetting procedures and prioritize a flexible modality which reduces the burden on suppliers and contractors. Samaritan's Purse will consider the viability of multiple vendors/suppliers/transporters to diminish the risk of relying on sole suppliers/transporters. Apart from the logistical constraints, insufficient knowledge of the intervention area affected the implementation process and planning abilities. Therefore, more extensive needs assessments coupled with inherent modality flexibility in future interventions were raised as critical components of improvements.

More resources and time need to be invested in pre-implementation assessments for programming in Bas-Uele Province, which will enable a better understanding of the project

environment in order to prepare for the challenges beforehand. Bas-Uele Province is incredibly remote and poses accessibility challenges to reach the targeted refugees who were integrated into the host communities. Accessibility challenges in Bas-Uele Province were far beyond what was anticipated, and future programming in that region will require other logistical options, such as airdrops of commodities, to enable easier and quicker access to the very hard-to-reach areas. In addition, such large quantities of food should not be procured in one purchase, but rather in smaller quantities. This would call for a longer project implementation timeframe to accommodate the challenges in the project area, and give ample time for the seasons to normalize, and appropriate assessments to be conducted. Another option would be to use alternative modalities such as cash or vouchers, instead of in-kind food. In Bas-Uele, the security situation is unpredictable with insurgents like the LRA remnants still operating within the province, calling for extra vigilance and flexibility.

Overall, the project identified a lack of consistency and confidence when dealing with government authorities which led to delays in procurement of commodities at the border and created issues when the BUBDs were approaching. Government bodies also resisted cooperation and created barriers when it became clear that SP would have to dispose of the food. To mitigate this in the future, SP will create a consistent strategy for SP-government relations, and emphasize relationships with key stakeholders that span different governmental departments, both locally and nationally, especially in Bas-Uele, Tshopo, and Haut-Uele Provinces.

Focus group discussions and observations conducted by the field team in Ango and Bondo territories established that the needs of these refugee and returnee HHs are multi-sectorial, and they require not only food, but water and sanitation facilities, non-food items (NFIs), shelter, and attention to protection concerns. The priority needs of HHs, especially those affected by wars and disasters (a constantly mobile population that often experiences significant property losses during the prolonged crises), need to be identified and addressed. In a refugee or returnee context, HHs often prioritize food to stay alive; however, the other basic needs such as water, shelter, and NFIs should not be underestimated. Central African Republic refugee and returnee HHs live in a crisis situation, often having suffered the loss/destruction/looting of goods (HH items, food and productive goods) and having been unable to carry these types of goods with them during population movements. Thus, they live with limited goods, leading to increased HH vulnerability and a reduced ability to cope with immediate needs and future shocks. Food assistance together with NFIs would better help these CAR refugee HHs.

While the cereal seeds distribution did not coincide with the local growing season, beneficiaries received seeds after the first planting season ending in July and were able to make use of the

second planting season which starts in the month of August. During the seed fairs, the beneficiaries were given the freedom to buy seeds according to their preferences. Vegetable seeds for the kitchen gardens, however, did not require a specific planting season as all the farmers had to do was water the vegetables regularly. Watering cans were distributed to the beneficiaries for this purpose. The specific vegetables were chosen as specified in the project proposal documents. It is very critical to align the agricultural activities with the agricultural calendar and to select seed types based on context and beneficiary preference, for maximum realization of results from farming activities.

9. Cross-Cutting Elements

While not able to reach the project objectives fully, the project did respond to the food needs of the vulnerable host and returnee HHs in the intervention sites that were reached. Provision of food assistance was based on food insecurity due to the impact of conflict. In line with the natural gender balance, food assistance was to be provided to 30,000 males and 30,000 females representing a 1:1 ratio. Over the project implementation period, the ratio reached was 1.2: 1, females to males.

Beneficiary targeting was based on the levels of food insecurity, hence facilitating provision of food assistance to the most deserving HHs during the period of the project. Participation of beneficiaries was achieved through the ATGs where beneficiaries worked in collective fields and then transferred new skills to individual fields. The new method of collective work provided an opportunity for leaders and the community to increase food production as a community. Coordination with stakeholders was a priority at all stages of the project. The local leaders, refugee leaders, refugee committees, returnee leaders, and complaints committees supported SP teams in sensitizing beneficiary HHs for upcoming distribution and supported creating beneficiary awareness of infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in relation to COVID-19 distribution adaptations.

Beneficiary targeting was done in a manner that would not engender corruption or cause gender issues, abiding by the “Do No Harm” principle. Targeting involved working with community leaders and various committees to identify vulnerable HHs, survey those HHs, and then clean and analyze the data to assess comparative vulnerability. Those involved in the identification process included local authorities (chiefs), civil society representatives, gender office representatives, refugee committee leaders, and SP staff. Households that exhibited vulnerability in either food or seeds were retained as beneficiaries for both food and complementary food security services sectors based on their levels of food and seed vulnerability. The most vulnerable HHs were prioritized for humanitarian assistance.

Samaritan's Purse's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) department, made up of 10 staff and day laborers, conducted the targeting of project participants. Local leaders and refugee representatives accompanied SP staff to identify refugees living in camps or with local host families. After the registration of participants was completed, data cleaning was done by M&E staff and duplicates were removed. Community mobilization took place in a central location to correct errors in names of individuals and their villages, etc. In secure areas, names were called out over a megaphone. In insecure areas, verification was done in a secure location, such as a school or church, and participants were asked to come one by one with their IDs for verification in the presence of community leaders and refugee representatives. The SP security team in the field approved each distribution site after assessing its security situation in order to not expose the beneficiaries to possible looting of their rations after distributions. The distribution sites were located in secure and accessible locations, in agreement with the beneficiaries and their leadership.

For the protection of beneficiaries, the distribution of both food and agriculture components was always carried out within a 3-km radius of the participants' homes. This also reduced exposure to unsafe or insecure areas where beneficiaries could possibly be attacked by armed groups present in some project areas. **Children were not exploited or engaged during the recruitment of day laborers.** During all distribution events, special attention was accorded to beneficiaries with special needs such as pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, elderly people, and people living with a chronic illness or disability. These beneficiaries were given priority and accompanied back to their homes by SP field staff.

One method in which SP ensured that beneficiaries targeted were not put at risk was through sensitization sessions. Samaritan's Purse amplified sensitization to all staff concerning the danger of abuse and exploitation among staff and, by extension, against the program participants. All staff were reminded of SP's zero tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, during sensitization sessions, SP staff were provided with an SP hotline number for reporting suspicions or concerns or instances of sexual exploitation and abuse to the Safeguarding Officer.

Samaritan's Purse also provided community sensitization to community leaders on topics such as how targeting is conducted, what makes a HH most vulnerable, how distributions would be implemented, and so on. These community leaders, in partnership with SP, then conducted sensitization drives among their local communities. This allowed HHs to understand what they could expect from SP and

how SP would coordinate and work collaboratively within targeted communities. This helped a great deal to manage expectations, as well as limit inter-communal tensions between those who were selected and those who were not selected as program participants.

To prevent fraud, there was a complaints and feedback management committee in each village where activities were conducted, through which the community could report any cases of fraud or sexual exploitation and abuse. When setting up complaints and feedback management committees for the distributions, at least two out of the six members who comprised the committees were women and, in many cases, there were three women serving on the committees. In addition, in all meetings with beneficiary representatives, at least 40% of the representatives were required to be women. The project also employed both male and female staff and women held positions of responsibility, such as Base Manager. **In addition, the program gave priority to women as HH representatives in the presence of their husbands. It was noted that women were preferred as this directly confronted malnutrition problem in the community and addressed the issue of diversion of provided inputs.**

There were only two post-distribution monitoring (PDM) activities completed throughout the duration of this program. One was conducted in July 2020, after the agriculture component had ended. This PDM reached more than 90% of the HHs that received tools, seeds, and training in agriculture. Samaritan's Purse was unable to utilize the lessons learned from this PDM as there were no agriculture activities to be implemented after July 2020. The other PDM was conducted in November 2020, after the completion of the first food distribution cycle. This PDM reached 51% of the HHs that received food commodities. However, following this, there were issues with the food commodities surpassing their BUBDs. Samaritan's Purse was unable to provide any more food distributions, and, rather, oversaw the disposition of the condemned food. Therefore, the program management team was not able to utilize the lessons learned from this PDM, as there were no further food distribution activities after November 2020.

Acknowledgements

Samaritan's Purse acknowledges the various actors for their commitment to the program and their efforts towards its success:

- Samaritan's Purse would first like to thank the FFP/BHA team, who supported the project in different ways, technically, administratively, and through moral support, as seen in the various field follow up sessions in Bunia and Kinshasa.
- Samaritan's Purse appreciates the project beneficiary communities for their cooperation and support, and patience with the delayed assistance. This was evident during site preparation, crowd control, food truck unloading, complaints management, and agriculture activities, with acts of kindness displayed by host families in providing IDPs with access to cultivation land.
- Samaritan's Purse acknowledges various government officials, civil society leaders, and provincial, territorial, and community leaders for the support provided to the program through consultations and information sharing, without which the project would have faced many challenges.
- Finally, program leadership sincerely thanks and appreciates all SP staff for making the program a reality amidst a challenging and unpredictable security context. The program, with the funding of the American people, represented a significant act of love for the lives of the conflict-impacted families in Bas-Uele Province of DRC.